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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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NSC FOR AFRICA DIRECTORATE AND MCLEAN

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SUBJECT: TFUS01: NIGERIA: AMBASSADOR CALLS ON EMIR OF ILORIN

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1. (SBU) During a visit to the OFR P3 training site in Ilorin, Ambassador Jeter, accompanied by OSD/ISA Director Theresa Whalen, DATT and PolMilOff, called on the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari. Expressing his deep condolences for the September 11 attacks on the United States, the Emir stated the beliefs voiced by Bin Laden and his ilk were not Islam, nor excused by any religion. He emphasized (perhaps as much for his 25 or so attendants as for us) that using religion or ethnicity to rationalize terror was unacceptable. Dismissing attempts to draw a line between civilizations, he stated that if he were President of Nigeria, he would foster a close relationship with the United States, and would even call upon Israel's expertise in irrigation and agricultural development. Finally, he invited the Ilorin-based Operation Focus Relief trainers to visit him any time, noting they would find him an "agreeable host."

2. (SBU) During the subsequent private session between the Ambassador and the Emir, Gambari lamented ethnic and religious tensions in Nigeria. He argued that these conflicts in Nigeria were primarily driven by those seeking political ends. To counter this in Ilorin, he said, he was working with traditional leaders and others to create avenues of discourse.

3. (SBU) COMMENT AND BIO INFORMATION: Gambari, a lawyer and judge by profession, became Emir in 1995. He is the brother of Ibrahim Gambari, Nigeria's decades-long PermRep at the UN and current Under Secretary and Special Representative to Africa. He was a driving force behind the creation of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) and served as the group's first Chairman. He is a relatively important Northern and Muslim leader, and his clear condemnation of the terrorist attacks against the U.S. in front of his attendants will resonate beyond the walls of his palace.

4. (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED: Ilorin itself sits on the line between the zones of influence of the Yoruba and the Hausa-Fulani. Gambari, whose authority comes from the Hausa-Fulani emirate system, must constantly engage in dialogue to keep his realm quiet. Feuding between Kwara State Governor Alhaji Mohammed Lawal and political heavyweight Dr. Olusola Saraki makes his task harder. Ilorin's relative quiet is testimony to the Emir's effectiveness thus far. END COMMENT AND BIO INFORMATION.
Jeter